



SUCCESS STORY

Fancy Food Show Chicago

Sauces, chutney, and tea represent some of the products displayed by participants sponsored by USAID Southern Africa Trade Hub



Photo: Southern Africa Trade Hub

Edward Khoromana, Managing Director of Nali Ltd., a Malawian sauce producer, displayed and provided samples at the Chicago Fancy Food Show.

The USAID Southern Africa Trade Hub sponsored six companies participation in the May 2006 Fancy Food Show held in Chicago. The companies represented a sampling of the specialty food products available from the Southern Africa region. Three companies report new exports as a result of their participation in this event.

The Fancy Food Show, organized by the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, Inc. (NASFT), attracts between 19,000 to 32,000 attendees representing the full diversity of the specialty foods market. Over a thousand exhibitors present a cumulative 100,000 specialty foods on the trade show floor. The venue is also designed to deliver meaningful one-on-one interaction and networking: NASFT estimates that 87 percent of Fancy Food attendees have decision-making authority within their respective companies.

Attendees often include supermarket buyers, specialty food retailers, chefs, restaurateurs and hoteliers, bakers, deli owners, gift store buyers, caterers, and candy store buyers. Additionally, seminars and workshops examine marketing challenges, industry trends, and niche opportunities.

In May 2006 the USAID Southern Africa Trade Hub sponsored six regional companies to attend the Spring Fancy Foods Show in Chicago: Eswatini Kitchen (Swaziland), Peppadew International (South Africa), Olyvenbosch Vineyards (South Africa), Nali (Malawi), Bou Joubert (South Africa), and African Spices (Zambia). Together, the group catered to the “strength in numbers” adage, raising the collective profile of southern Africa as a supply source for specialty foods. Individually, the trade show format provided some pivotal successes.

Three of the six companies sponsored by the USAID Trade Hub have since realized new exports to the U.S. specialty and gourmet food sector.

Southern African producers are well poised to capitalize on this market evolution. But the mandate of specialty food sales is more hands-on, more personal, than mass order sales. Small southern African companies who produce high quality products are already successful in local and regional markets; and many have beginners’ experience exporting to the U.S. or the EU. At interactive venues such as Fancy Foods they have the opportunity to share themselves to consumers increasingly shopping for flavor with conscience.